

There was a monk who lived on the edge of a small town, much to the delight of the townspeople. Whenever he ventured into town to help someone, everyone came out of their homes to give him gifts from their gardens, calling out to him, "Oh, Teacher, we're so fortunate to have you living nearby! You are such a wonderful person! You do so much good, Teacher! Your presence is such a blessing!"

To all of this, the monk would always reply, "Is that so? Is that so?"

One day a young woman came to the monk's hut and said, "Oh, Teacher, I'm in terrible trouble. I'm pregnant and my family will disown me. The young man who I love so much has fled to another town because my family would certainly do him harm. I have nowhere else to turn and no one else to ask for help."

The monk replied that she could live in the back room and help around the house and she would then have the security of a home for her child.

Well, now when the monk went into town, he was reviled. "You dirty old man! Look how you have betrayed our trust and taken advantage of that young woman! How could we have ever believed in you? What shame you have brought on us!" And they hurled rotten fruit at him along with their insults.

To all of this, the monk would always reply, "Is that so? Is that so?"

After a while, the father of the child returned to the town and presented himself before the family, saying, "I have spent the past two years learning a trade in a neighboring town and now I am able to provide a home for your daughter and grandchild." The family was overjoyed. Although it wasn't the best of situations, it was so much better than they had feared that they welcomed their daughter and grandchild back into the family with open arms.

How different it was when the monk came into town then. The townspeople lined the road every time, presenting him with gifts of food and calling out, "Oh, Teacher, how could we have ever doubted you? Look at the wonderful thing you have done! We are so ashamed! Please forgive us! You are such a wise and compassionate person! We are so fortunate to have you living nearby!"

To all of this, the monk would always reply, "Is that so? Is that so?"

- How could the monk have avoided conflict and judgment in the short term and kept life peaceful for himself?

- How do I do this?
- What are the long-term results of refusing to “keep the peace?” and doing the loving thing?
- What are the long-term results of protecting yourself from the judgments of others, and potential conflict?